

A1
1. (Amended) Hearing aid apparatus, comprising:
a first signal path having a microphone for receiving sound in a vicinity of a user, a signal processor for processing the sound into a processed sound, and a speaker for outputting the processed sound into a vicinity of an ear canal of the user;
a second signal path for establishing communication between the hearing aid apparatus and a location remote from the user via a communications device connected to the hearing aid apparatus, said second signal path being adapted to transmit signals to and receive signals from the communications device; and
a switch for automatically selecting the first signal path or the second signal path in response to a detected occurrence of a predetermined condition of the second signal path.

A2
3. (Amended) Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second signal path is selected when the hearing aid apparatus is in a communications state with the communications device.

A2
4. (Amended) Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said communications device is a cell phone and said predetermined condition is a phone ring condition of the cell phone.

A3
8. (Amended) Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:
a switch to place the apparatus into a sleep state, wherein power to at least some portions of the hearing aid apparatus is shutdown.

A4
15. (Amended) Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 2, comprising:
a switch for manually selecting a communications mode wherein the hearing aid state is disabled, the hearing aid apparatus being adapted to be automatically switched between a communications state and a sleep state of the communications mode.

Please add new claims 16-24 as follow:

A5
16. (New) A hearing aid apparatus, comprising an I/O port for receiving signals from and transmitting signals to a communications device connected to the I/O port for providing wire or wireless communication with a remote device, the hearing aid apparatus being adapted to operate in a hearing aid state or a communications state.

17. (New) The hearing aid apparatus of claim 16, further comprising:
a first signal path comprising a microphone for converting sound into signals and a signal processor for processing signals;
a second signal path coupled to the I/O port; and
a first switch coupled between the first signal path and the second signal path, said first switch being adapted to automatically select the first signal path for receiving sound or the second signal path for receiving or transmitting signals in response to a detected occurrence of a predetermined condition of the second signal path, wherein

the first signal path is selected when the apparatus is in the hearing aid state and the second signal path is selected when the apparatus is in the communications state with the communications device.

18. (New) The hearing aid apparatus of claim 17, further comprising:
a second switch for manually selecting between the first signal path and the second signal path; and
a third switch for manually placing the hearing aid apparatus into a sleep state, wherein the hearing aid apparatus can be switched between a hearing aid mode and a communications mode by consecutively pressing the second switch and the third switch, the hearing aid mode comprising the hearing aid state and the communications state and the communications mode comprising the communication state.

19. (New) The hearing aid apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said communications device is a cell phone and said predetermined condition is a phone ring condition of the cell phone.

20. (New) The hearing aid apparatus according to claim 17, wherein the predetermined condition is absence of an active signal in the second signal path for a predetermined period of time.

21. (New) The hearing aid apparatus according to claim 17, comprising:
a memory for storing a first set of sound processing control parameters for the first signal path, and a second set of sound processing control parameters, different from the first set, for the second signal path.

22. (New) The hearing aid apparatus according to claim 21, wherein the first set of sound processing control parameters are selected based on a hearing impairment of a user.

23. (New) The hearing aid apparatus according to claim 21, wherein the second set of sound processing control parameters are selected based on the quality of a transmitted signal.

24. (New) A hearing aid apparatus, comprising:
 a first signal path having a microphone for receiving sound in a vicinity of a user, a processor for processing the sound into a processed sound, and a speaker for outputting the processed sound into a vicinity of an ear canal of the user;
 a second signal path for establishing communication between the hearing aid apparatus and a communications device connected to the hearing aid device;
 a first switch for automatically selecting the first signal path or the second signal path in response to a detected occurrence of a predetermined condition of the second signal path;
 a second switch for manually selecting between the first signal path and the second signal path; and
 a third switch for manually placing the apparatus into a sleep state, wherein the hearing aid apparatus can be switched between a hearing aid mode and a communications mode by consecutively pressing the second switch and the third switch.

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated August 15, 2002, which was paper # 7 of the present application. Applicants cancel claims 6 and 14 without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants amend claims 1, 3-4, 8, and 15 to better describe aspects of the present invention. Moreover, applicants add new claims 16-24 to the present application. Pursuant to this amendment, claims 1-5, 7-13, and 15-24 are pending. Reexamination and reconsideration of the application are respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-8 and 13-15 as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,751,820 to Taenzer (hereinafter "the Taenzer patent"). The Examiner also rejected claims 9-12 as obvious over Taenzer in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,202,927 to Topholm, or U.S. Patent No. 6,144,748 to Kerns, or U.S. Patent No. 5,721,783 to Anderson. Applicants respectfully disagree. Applicants, however, amend claims 1, 3-4, 8, and 15 only to better clarify aspects of the present invention. In light of the amendment, all rejections are respectfully traversed for reasons